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DRAKE BLAMED FOR POT FINES {page 09}

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RIKARD LARMA/METRO

Hope fading for victims of foreclosure

- Recovery feels far away in Pennsylvania, where filings are up dramatically
- One Germantown resident is determined to stay with the help of the community {page 02}

▶ Germantown resident Rhonda Lancaster's home is facing foreclosure, but not quietly.

Metropolitik

ObamaCare on its way to the Supremes

- High Court to weigh law's constitutionality this week
- Reform package rests on legality of mandate {page 07}

Ditch your Debbie Downer

How you can weed out your negative and unsupportive friends {page 13}

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Foreclosure hits home

- The state saw a dramatic increase in foreclosure filings last month
- Germantown musician is facing eviction, but doesn't plan on leaving

Rhonda Lancaster is a fighter. She inherited it from her mother, a former Black Panther. But now Lancaster finds herself going against a massive, complex opponent: foreclosure.

Lancaster, a local musician who has played with acts such as Earth, Wind and Fire, is trying to keep the Germantown home where she's lived for 35 years. Her mother signed a reverse mortgage near the end of her life, but Lancaster was unable to get her name on the deed. Much of her money went to paying her mother's medical bills, making it hard to keep up with the mortgage, and shortly after her mother passed in 2009, the home went into foreclosure, she said.

Despite appealing to lawyers and seeking legal counsel, Lancaster has been unable to modify the loan or get financial assistance. Yet, she doesn't plan to pack up and go. "I refuse to lay down and take it," Lancaster said last week in front of her house, where a large banner reads "Keep families in their homes." "Somebody has to stand up. This steamrolling has to be stopped."

More Philadelphia homeowners are finding themselves in Lancaster's position. In February, the Philadelphia area saw a huge jump in foreclosure filings, with one filing for every 828 homes. That was up 47 percent from February 2011, according to RealtyTrac, which analyzes data nationwide. Miami and Tampa, both in Florida, were the only metropolitan areas that saw a bigger spike.

Last week, some of Lancaster's fellow musicians held an event at her home to raise awareness about her situation. Neighbors and friends have also joined in protesting her eviction, which could happen any day.

Cheri Honkala, founder of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and a longtime advocate for homeowners, said Lancaster's case is shedding light on a serious problem. "People are really beginning to unite with this idea [of supporting their neighbors]," she said. "They're against adding more blight to the neighborhood."

SOLOMON D. LEACH
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Free seminar

Philadelphia Sheriff Jewel Williams is offering a free mortgage foreclosure prevention seminar April 9 at Temple University.

Williams' office said it will be the first in a series of free seminars to help homeowners. Those interested must call 215-686-3539 to register.

RIKARD LARMA/METRO

▶ Germantown resident Rhonda Lancaster is one of many in Pennsylvania facing foreclosure.

Behind the rising numbers

PHILADELPHIA. Experts say the dramatic increase in foreclosure filings is the result of a multibillion-dollar settlement between 49 states and five of the nation's largest lenders. The settlement laid out clear steps for banks to proceed with foreclosures, and some banks are now pushing through foreclosures that had been delayed.

"We really think it's unfair to go forward on foreclosures on families when the banks are being investigated."
CHERI HONKALA

"I do anticipate that overall we're going to see an increase in [foreclosures] in 2012 from 2011," RealtyTrac vice president Daren Blomquist said. "These delays were in place for a long time, over a year, so I think we're going to see the increases from a [month] ago happen pretty much throughout this year."

At the same time, Pennsylvania's successful Homeowners' Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program ended due to lack of funding and a federal program has also expired. METRO

In the news

Face-painted woman robs Citizens Bank

Police are looking for a face-painted woman who they say robbed a Citizens Bank in Wilmington on Saturday. The suspect allegedly presented a demand note that implied she was armed, but did not display a weapon before leaving with an undisclosed amount of cash, police said. Police describe her as a 5-foot-2 to 5-foot-3 white woman, aged 24 to 30. METRO/AW

In the news

Emergency cash

The Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry has received a $5 million emergency grant to serve the workers affected by Sunoco and ConocoPhillips refinery closings, officials said. The grant will cover Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, Delaware and Philadelphia counties and offer job training, workshops and other services. METRO

Woman fatally shot in West Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA. A neighborhood is still recovering from a grisly discovery Saturday night. Police said that the body of a woman, 31, was found by a male friend in her first floor apartment on the 300 block of North 64th Street shortly after 8 p.m. She suffered from multiple gunshot wounds to the chest and died on the scene, police said.

Neighbors, who identified the woman as Valerie Angelina, said they were shocked. "I held her in my arms when she was a baby," said Alfredo MacMillan, who owns a garage on the block.

She was the city's 85th homicide victim of the year, and the third in as many hours on an unusually violent Saturday night. METRO/AW

RIKARD LARMA/METRO

▶ Angelina, a nurse, lived in the neighborhood for about 20 years, neighbors said.

Police recover 60 stolen bikes during PSPCA bust

PHILADELPHIA. Police recovered nearly 60 stolen bicycles Friday while removing dogs from a home in North Philadelphia suspected to be involved in dog fighting, according to the Pennsylvania SPCA.

The house on the 2200 block of West Lehigh Avenue was under surveillance for some time as a suspected "staging area" for dog fights after an informant tipped off the Humane Law Enforcement Unit, the PSPCA said.

A man was arrested and a second person of interest has been identified, the PSPCA said. The bicycles were seized as evidence by Philadelphia police. METRO/AW

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▶ Police are still investigating if this new incident is related to the tire slashings in Mayfair that have been plaguing residents since October.

RIKARD LARMA/METRO

Tire slashings plague Oxford Circle

Hours after police released surveillance footage of a suspect possibly responsible for about 80 tire slashings in the area, nine more tires were slashed in Northeast Philadelphia — this time in the Oxford Circle section. "I'm a pastor – I just go to work, church and home," said 12-year resident Deslour Des Coreus-Roland, who parked her minivan on the block at 10 p.m. and awoke to find its front tire deflated. "I'm shocked. I'm just stuck here. I can't even go to church." METRO

Cops charge driver with DUI in fatal crash

A man was charged with DUI for his part in a car crash that killed an 11-year-old girl and injured four other people in the Italian Market yesterday.

Florida resident Aleandro Drosi, 28, was driving west on Washington Avenue in a rented Chevrolet Impala around 12:30 p.m. when he allegedly ran a red light and T-boned a woman driving south on Eighth Street in a Nissan Xterra SUV, police said. The impact forced the SUV to run up on the sidewalk and smash through seafood stand and restaurant Captain Jesse G.

"It's unreal. There's no room on the face of this earth for drunken drivers," said neighbor Carl Scarpa, who came to the scene to check on his friend, owner Jesse Giordano. "He was saying he just barely jumped out of the way in time."

Two children and three adults were injured, including the SUV's driver. An 11-year-old girl coming out of the store was pinned to the wall and died on the scene. A 3-year-old boy was in stable condition, as were all of the adults.

"There's a lot of busy traffic here, then you get drunk and drive and that's what happens," Scarpa said. "There's no excuse for driving drunk. It's pathetic."

Investigators said they are looking into more serious charges, like homicide by vehicle, for Drosi.

CHARLES MOSTOLLER

▶ A car rammed into a seafood store at Eighth Street and Washington Avenue yesterday, killing an 11-year-old girl.

"With everything else going on in the world, you'd think you'd be safe walking on the street in broad daylight." SCARPA

ALEX WIGGLESWORTH
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2011-0195 METRO (1/12)

GETTY IMAGES

▶ A villager points to a spot where a family was allegedly shot in their residence by Staff Sergeant Robert Bales in Alkozai village of Panjwai district, Kandahar province.

Afghans: US paid $50,000 per shooting spree death

U.S. authorities have given cash compensation to the families of Afghans killed in a shooting rampage allegedly carried out by an American soldier in Kandahar province, a family member and a tribal elder said yesterday.

The families received around $50,000 for each person killed and about $10,000 for each wounded in the shootings in two villages in Panjwai district earlier this month. Afghan officials say 16 people, including nine children and women, were killed in the attacks.

"We were invited by the foreign and Afghan officials in Panjwai yesterday, and they said this money is an assistance from Obama," Haji Jan Agha, who said he lost his cousins in the attack, told Reuters — referring to President Barack Obama.

The U.S. embassy directed all questions to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, which is fighting the war in Afghanistan.

An ISAF spokesman said he was in not in a position to either confirm or deny whether compensation was given or not — and if so, how much.

Lieutenant Commander Brian Badura said that as a matter of policy ISAF does not make restitution for losses resulting from combat, combat-related activities or operational necessity.

"Individual troop contributing nations may participate in some form of restitution consistent with the cultural norms of Afghanistan," he said. "Settlement can come in a number of forms which may [be], but is not always, financial." **REUTERS**

Killings occurred in two waves

The U.S. Army sergeant accused of killing 17 Afghan civilians is believed to have carried out the rampage in two stages, returning to base after the first shootings and then going out to kill again, a U.S. official said on Saturday.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, did not offer further details about the investigation into the March 11 shooting spree in southern Afghanistan, which has further eroded U.S.-Afghan relations already frayed by a decade of war.

But the disclosure points to an extended timeline for the alleged killing rampage by Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, a decorated 38-year-old veteran of four combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. **REUTERS**

Syrian forces on offensive; Annan in Moscow

BEIRUT. Russia offered "full support" for peace envoy Kofi Annan's efforts to end fighting in Syria yesterday, but said his mission would need more time as forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad attacked Homs and other rebel strongholds.

Moscow also reiterated its stance that foreign support for the Syrian opposition was the main obstacle to peace, while U.S. President Barack Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan discussed how to get nonlethal aid out to the opposition. **REUTERS**

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Dick Cheney gets a new heart

FALLS CHURCH. Former Vice President Dick Cheney was recovering on Saturday after undergoing heart transplant surgery.

The 71-year-old who wielded unprecedented power as vice president during the George W. Bush administration's war on terrorism, was in the intensive care unit at Inova Fairfax Hospital

in Falls Church, Va.

Cheney, who has suffered five heart attacks, the first at age 37, had been on the cardiac transplant list for more than 20 months before he received the heart from an anonymous donor.

Cheney's transplant followed a series of procedures in recent years to extend the use of his heart. Cheney had bypass surgery in 1988 and later had two angioplasties. In 2001 he had a defibrillator implanted in his chest. **REUTERS**

Anti-spending pol's home town pinched

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Republican U.S. Representative Paul Ryan's budget-cutting vision has made him a hero to conservatives across the country. It's less popular in his home town.

As Ryan's proposal to slash taxes and spending started to move through Congress last week, local officials in the humble Rust Belt city of Janesville, Wisc., scrambled to recover from last year's cutbacks.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had clawed back $344,000 from the city's affordable-housing fund, so the Janesville Community Development Authority voted to drain its reserves to keep its 525 families in the program.

The city won't have to put anybody out on the street, probably. But there is no cushion left.

Ryan has called for belt-tightening to head off fiscal disaster in the years to come, but Janesville is already familiar with austerity.

There's less money for job training, health clinics and the food bank; higher property taxes and higher car fees; larger school class sizes; crumbling roads and fewer firefighters.

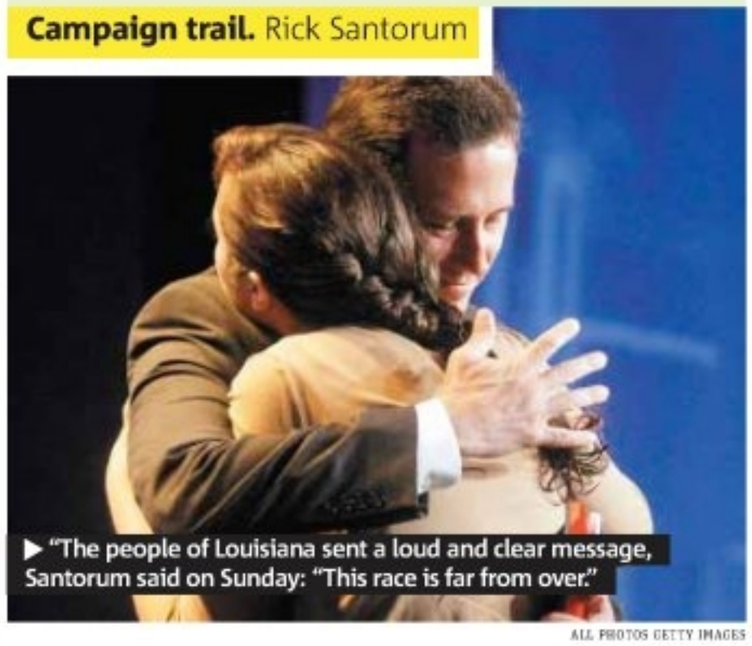
"It's like being in a fight against five or six people. Every time you turn around you're getting punched from a different direction," said City Council President Russ Steeber. **REUTERS**

Ryan's rising star?

WISCONSIN. In the 14 years since voters in the southeast corner of Wisconsin first sent him to Congress, Ryan has emerged as perhaps the country's foremost fiscal conservative. Only 42, he is frequently mentioned as a possible vice presidential pick.

His latest budget plan, unveiled Tuesday, will serve as a rallying cry for Republicans as they try to win control of the White House and both chambers of Congress in the Nov. 6 elections. **REUTERS**

Campaign trail. Rick Santorum



ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Rick Santorum cruised to victory in the Louisiana Republican presidential primary on Saturday but still trails Mitt Romney by a wide margin in the national delegate count for the party nomination. Romney, a former Massachusetts governor, finished second, with Newt Gingrich in third. **REUTERS**

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Will health care law survive court ruling?

▶ "In today's political climate, once you have an explanation that takes more than two sentences, you're screwed," says economist Jonathan Gruber, who supports the individual mandate, "because someone else will have a one-sentence lie."

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The moment that conservative America has been waiting for these past two years is nearly upon us. This week the Supreme Court will hear arguments to determine the constitutionality of ObamaCare, the health care reform law that has become the president's signature legislative accomplishment as well as the most powerful weapon in his rivals' arsenal.

Justices will devote three days of oral arguments to the issue — the most consideration given to any one law in nearly five decades — but particular attention should be paid to tomorrow's debate concerning the individual mandate, that component of the law that imposes a low annual fee on individuals who refuse to pursue insurance coverage. The legality of the individual mandate, widely demonized by the right as a freedom-crushing measure synonymous with government takeover, may determine the ultimate fate of the whole song and dance.

(Point of fact: The individual mandate is a Republican idea, developed by a conservative think tank, first proposed by Republican legislators, originally made law by a Republican governor and now vehemently opposed nearly uniformly by the Republican party.)

So why the individual mandate? Well, conservative experts — including, perhaps most infamously, former Mass. Gov. Mitt Romney — understood the economic necessity of bringing more individuals into the private insurance system as a means of lowering costs and improving services. The individual mandate, they concluded, ensures that insurers remain profitable enough to provide high-level services to all Americans.

In an unabashed indictment of party politics, conservatives opposed the idea as soon as Obama picked it up in 2008. But supporters of the so-called mandate point out that current industry wrongs — like excluding pre-existing conditions and shifting health costs onto taxpayers — far exceed any freedom crushing that might be claimed against it. As MIT economist Jonathan Gruber puts it: "No longer will people be bankrupted because they have a bad gene or a bad traffic accident."

The Supreme Court won't come back with a decision until sometime this summer. If the justices rule against the mandate, that could tank the whole law. And if they don't? Well, don't expect Republicans to let that get in the way.

Metro does not endorse the opinions of the author, or any opinions expressed on its pages.

GET FED

Because who has time for more than the headlines?

- "Did Fox News Stop Selling Hoodies After Trayvon Martin's Death?" **THINKPROGRESS**
- "Despite Victory, Santorum Delegate Haul Is Modest" **NYTIMES**
- "White House Dodges Gay Marriage Debate" **BUZZFEED**
- "College Grads Continue Their Exodus From the GOP" **THE DAILY BEAST**
- "How the legal assault on Obama's health law went mainstream" **POLITICO.COM**
- "Plouffe calls out GOP candidates over Obama [Trayvon] reaction" **CNN**
- "Health reform at 2: Why American health care will never be the same" **THE WASHINGTON POST**
- "Mitt Romney's Evangelical Problem" **THE NEW YORKER**

ObamaCare?

A quick update on the language: President Obama, on the reform law's two-year anniversary last week, finally embraced the "ObamaCare" smear once and for all. "You want to call it ObamaCare," he told an Atlanta audience on Friday, "that's OK, because I do care." We therefore feel it is now appropriate to refer to the dreaded health law as its right-wing opponents intended.

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News in brief

GETTY IMAGES

▶ President Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak

North Korea will achieve nothing from rocket launch: Obama

SEOUL. U.S. President Barack Obama said yesterday that North Korea, which has planned a rocket launch for next month, will achieve nothing through threats and provocations.

Obama, talking on the eve of a nuclear security summit in Seoul, said such a launch would increase reclusive North Korea's isolation. North Korea says the rocket will send a satellite into orbit. **REUTERS**

Chavez starts radiation therapy, may meet Pope

CARACAS. Venezuela's Hugo Chavez said yesterday he had started radiation treatment in Cuba, where he could also meet Pope Benedict in the latest high-profile development as the president tries to fight off cancer and win re-election.

Chavez was back in Havana a month after he had surgery there to remove a second malignant tumor from his pelvis. The treatment will take him off the political stage just as his election rival gears up a nationwide campaign tour ahead of the Oct. 7 vote.

In a phone call to Venezuelan state TV, Chavez said he's undergone the first of five sessions of radiation therapy.

"Last night I had the first session, fortunately without any kind of problems. Early tonight I'll have a second application," he said. "God willing, I will be in Venezuela on Thursday." **REUTERS**

Rallies held around the country for Trayvon Martin

Rallies are being held in cities across the country this weekend to protest the failure of police to arrest a Florida neighborhood watch volunteer for shooting to death an unarmed black teenager.

Protesters, some dressed in "hoodie" hooded sweatshirts like the kind 17-year-old Trayvon Martin wore at the time of his death, gathered for events in Columbia, S.C.; Washington, D.C.; and Chicago on Saturday.

A protest is planned today in Sanford, Fla., the Orlando suburb where the shooting took place.

Martin was shot dead on Feb. 26 after George Zimmerman, 28, a white Hispanic neighborhood watch captain, believed the young man walking through the gated community in a hoodie looked suspicious. Zimmerman followed him and an altercation ensued.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ People attend a demonstration in Washington on Saturday to demand justice for Trayvon Martin.

Zimmerman has not been arrested, though state and federal authorities are investigating.

About 300 people of various races and ages gathered in Daley Plaza in Chicago on a cool, wet Saturday afternoon. Protesters held signs with slogans like, "It's not a crime to be black" and "Wearing a hoodie is not a crime." **REUTERS**

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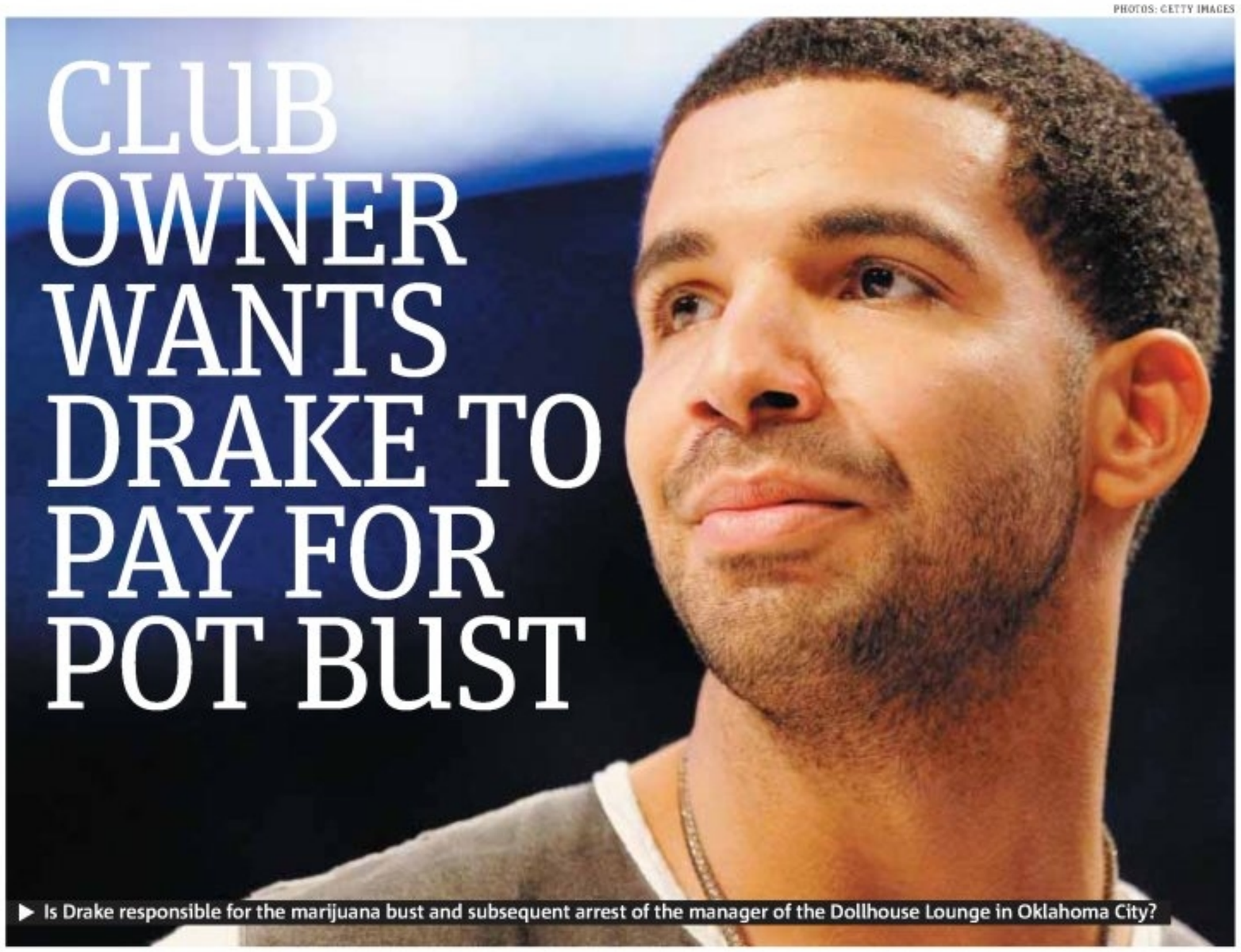
THE WORD

Metro's **Dorothy Robinson** shares her take on the world of gossip @dorothyatmetro dorothy.robinson@metro.us

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

CLUB OWNER WANTS DRAKE TO PAY FOR POT BUST



▶ Is Drake responsible for the marijuana bust and subsequent arrest of the manager of the Dollhouse Lounge in Oklahoma City?

A rapper smoking weed? Not that surprising. A rapper smoking weed in Oklahoma City? Well, also not that surprising. What else is there to do in Oklahoma City?

Earlier this week, **Drake** — the former child star turned lover boy — was reportedly responsible for a huge cloud of pot smoke in a VIP area, which caused the Dollhouse Lounge to close down — even though they opened for the night especially for him, according to TMZ. But here's where the story gets weird: The spot's manager claims that once he and the staff smelled the smoke, they shut the party down. Then the cops came (apparently to help "restore order") and they discovered a half-burnt joint where Drake and his entourage were previously hanging. So they arrested the club manager — not Drake — and now the he's mad and wants Drake to help him out with the various tickets, which amount to several thousands' worth.

A half-smoked joint found in an ashtray causes not only an arrest but also a lawsuit? "Crime" in Oklahoma City is adorable. What do managers expect when they rent out a club to a world-famous rapper and his entourage? A knitting circle?

Talking points

Lawrence's favorite hunger-buster

The "Hunger Games" star **Jennifer Lawrence** doesn't go hungry, thanks in part to her friendship with **Zoe Kravitz**, daughter of co-star Lenny. The two met on the set of "X-Men: First Class" and hung out on the "Games" set. "We just went to her dad's hotel room and got gummi bears and HBO," Lawrence told Us Weekly, adding that she loves Skittles candies. "We racked up so many charges. Mr. Kravitz was like, 'Did you guys order a lot of room service?!'"

▶ Lawrence

Kardashian's flour bomb

Last Thursday, someone threw a plastic bag of flour at **Kim Kardashian** on the red carpet (though it's probably not the first time she's been covered in white powder). Afterwards, the reality TV star said she wouldn't press charges, but now tells E! News: "I said earlier [that] I wasn't. [But] I am just going to think about it, because I don't want someone to think they can really get away with that. I was laughing it off earlier and, you know, I think that is the only thing I knew how to do at the time."

Jolie takes on leg-haters

Angelina Jolie, whose right gam and odd gunslinger pose at the Oscars launched a meme, a Twitter feed and impersonators, now tells the Huffington Post: "I honestly didn't pay attention to it. I don't watch those TV shows, and if I go online and see something about myself I don't click on it. And the people I surround myself with don't really talk about this kind of stuff. I heard something, but I didn't pay any attention. It's as simple as being a woman picking a dress you like and having a night and not really thinking about anything else."

Oh, come on, Jolie! Can't you ever admit when you do something ridiculous? And yes, constantly sticking your leg out as though it was sniffing around looking for dinner was ridiculous.

Jolie

The feed ...

▶ Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

Today, Damon Wayans Jr. gets philosophical, Katy Perry faces her fears, Aziz Ansari finds the odds are ever in his favor and Albert Brooks is following the news.

@wayansjr: #thatawkwardmoment when you're about to get some, but you want her to take a shower first because she's been dancing A LOT

@katyperry: Is anyone still traumatized by the idea that you might get eaten by an escalator if you miss a step or have a lose thread on your sweater?

@azizansari: Is Hunger Games about a girl facing a series of challenges and hurdles during lunchtime to get tasty tacos? #MyLifeStoryDog

@AlbertBrooks: Dick Cheney gets new heart! Not to be confused with compassion.

Ansari

myentertainment

When Muhammad Ali met Miley Cyrus, and other weekend adventures

1. Madonna introduced the "amazing" band Avicii on day two of the Ultra Music Festival 14 at Bayfront Park in Miami on Saturday.

2. Muhammad Ali met **Miley Cyrus** during his "Celebrity Fight Night XIII" on Saturday in Phoenix, Ariz. Serious question: Is the top of Cyrus' head flat?

3. Justin Bieber posed with a cake celebrating the upcoming release of his new single "Boyfriend" during an interview for "The Elvis Duran and the Morning Show" on Saturday in West Hollywood.

4. Teresa Giudice promoted her new sparkling wine, Fabellini, at Gary's Wine & Marketplace on Saturday in Wayne, N.J.

5. Cloris Leachman got a kiss from **Uggie** at the 26th Genesis Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel on Saturday in Beverly Hills, Calif.

6. Guns N' Roses bassist **Duff McKagan** signed a copy of his new book "It's So Easy" at Book Soup on Saturday in West Hollywood, Calif.

7. Perez Hilton and **Kim Kardashian** arrived at Perez Hilton's 34th birthday party at Siren Studios on Saturday in Los Angeles.

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From 'Hibernation' to an awakening

Youth Lagoon singer Trevor Powers talks about the 'fuzzy and obscure'
But his next album may be less so

Songwriter Trevor Powers, who plays every instrument on Youth Lagoon's debut, "The Year of Hibernation," buries his reverberating vocals so deeply at times on the album that his fragile-sounding voice almost feels like another register on his keyboard. But live, there is no escaping the wistful words coming over the PA.

"Don't stop imagining, the day that you do is the day that you die," warns the 22-year-old Powers on the song, "17." He is staring into a crowd from under his curly bangs at the SXSW Music Conference in Austin, Texas, where earlier this month Youth Lagoon played nine sets.

Where the song is able to seep into the background of your workday, Powers and guitarist Logan Hyde swell slowly and contagiously along to the song's synthetic claps. There's not a single person in attendance who isn't nodding along. It's great when you enjoy a song's most fundamental melodies — but when the lyrics reveal themselves to be inspiring, that is one of music's greatest rewards. Powers says he buried the words for a reason.

"When you take the skeleton of a song, when you actually record it, you want to present it in a way that fits with that main idea of the song. And with these songs it felt right to present them in a fuzzy and obscure type of way," says Powers between gigs at SXSW. He's sipping a carton of coconut water and smells like beer.

He says though he does present his lyrics in this "fuzzy and obscure type of way," it doesn't prevent fans from trying to figure out what he's saying.

"I remember one time going online, kind of stumbling on a lyrics website and finding some of the songs," he laughs. "They weren't even close."

PAT HEALY
pat.healy@metro.us

COURTESY OF FAT POSSUM RECORDS

▶ The creature from Youth Lagoon: Powers brings his show to Union Transfer tonight. Visit www.utphilly.com for tickets.

'Hibernation'? Ha!

Powers says that since "The Year of Hibernation" came out in September, the year has been anything but hibernation, as he has been on the road most of the time with an ever-rising profile.

"The best way to describe it would be if your life turns 180 degrees," he says.

And this will most likely change the tone of the second Youth Lagoon album.

"Obviously the songs you write are not going to be the same," he says. "I guess my whole mentality, and my life in general, is different now because I'm in such a different place — and so the music that I'm working on has a different flavor to it."

Box office

'Hunger Games' stuns with $155 million opening

The highly anticipated drama "The Hunger Games" opened with a staggering $155 million in estimated U.S. and Canadian weekend ticket sales, beating Hollywood's loftiest expectations and ranking as the third-highest domestic opening in history.

The debut for the film, which tells the story of an oppressive society's teen death match, ranked behind only last summer's "Harry Potter" finale and 2008 Batman movie "The Dark Knight," distributor Lions Gate Entertainment said.

The performance topped industry forecasts for an opening of about $125 million from Friday through Sunday.

"Hunger Games" set records for highest opening of a film that was not a sequel and biggest debut outside of the summer blockbuster season, Lions Gate said.

The movie took in an average of $37,467 at 4,137 locations.

"Hunger Games" is a post-apocalyptic drama based on the first of three best-selling young adult novels by Suzanne Collins. Jennifer Lawrence plays Katniss Everdeen, a teen girl who fights in a televised battle to the death ordered by her society's rulers. Everdeen becomes a beacon of hope for freedom against the totalitarian government. REUTERS

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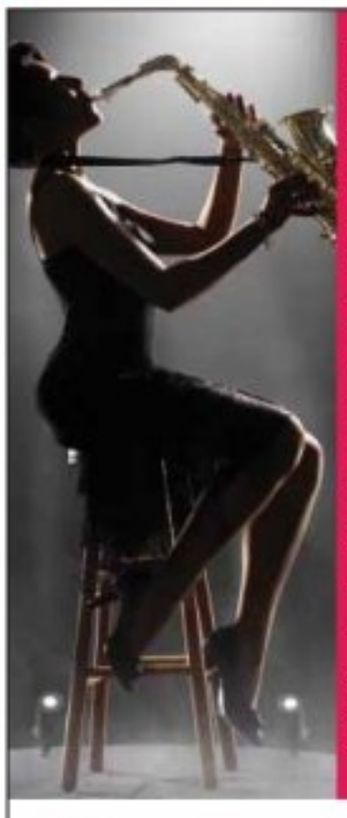

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Strike a pose

Yoga pose of the week: Prayer Squat

▶ **1.** Stand with your feet apart about as wide as your yoga mat.
▶ **2.** Keep your legs straight as you inhale, raising your arms straight up overhead and bringing your palms together.
▶ **3.** On an exhale, bring your hands in to a prayer position and squat down. Your knees should be bent at about 90 degrees.
▶ **4.** Inhale as you start to straighten the legs and return to your standing position, raising the arms together and straight up.
▶ **5.** Repeat until you feel your muscles warming up.
Benefits: The squat opens the hips and improves balance, memory and concentration.

—Pose courtesy of Stephanie Knutsson, Bodyism Yoga instructor, www.bodyism.com

▶ Take this pose slowly if you suffer from hip or knee injuries.

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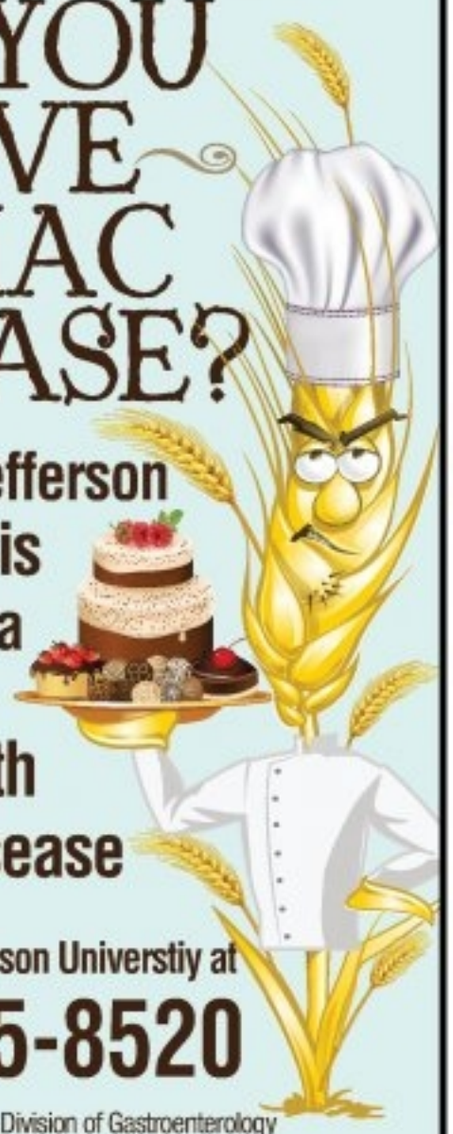

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Fear-mongers are only going to bring you down

Simply put: They're fear-mongers. They could win the lottery and find something wrong with it, have the day off from work and whine or get promoted only to moan and groan. They complain about everything and anything, so don't personalize it. Fortunately, now that you're embarking on making positive changes in your life you recognize the potential negative impact these friends can have on you — and that means you can do something about it.

It's important to surround yourself with positive people as you embark on change. To help you weed out those who aren't, take a look at the checklist below. Think about people in your life and ask yourself the following:

- Is the person generally negative?
- Is the person unhappy in his or her career, family and/or relationships?
- Do you feel exhausted after spending time with the person?
- Is the person demanding or self-absorbed?
- Is there a lot of drama and crisis in the person's life?
- Does the person have a victim's mentality?

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, then you know that the person isn't going to be supportive of you when you pursue your goals. Keep your distance and maintain boundaries. Now is the time to put your needs first. Don't stoop to that person's level, and don't feel obligated to remain friends. Doing so only enables the behavior and drains you. Be strong and stand up for yourself. To appear vulnerable provides an opportunity for the fear-monger to suck the life out of you. Speak up and be proud of your goals and what you've set your sights on. Align yourself with like-minded, positive people who share your interests and goals. This will help drive you forward. Check out my new book, "BE FEARLESS: Change Your Life in 28 Days," to learn more about how to purge yourself of fear-mongers.

*– Jonathan Alpert is a licensed psychotherapist. His new book, **"BE FEARLESS: Change Your Life in 28 Days,"** is out April 24. It will be sold at all major booksellers and Amazon. Check in with him online at **www.jonathanalpert.com**, on Facebook (**www.facebook.com/jonathanalpert**) and on Twitter **@jonathanalpert**.*

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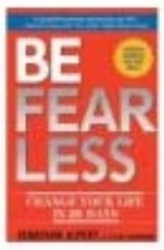
The question

- I'm embarking on a number of personal changes in my life and will need full support from my friends. For whatever reason, they tend to be negative about everything and not very supportive of me. Why are they like that and what should I do?



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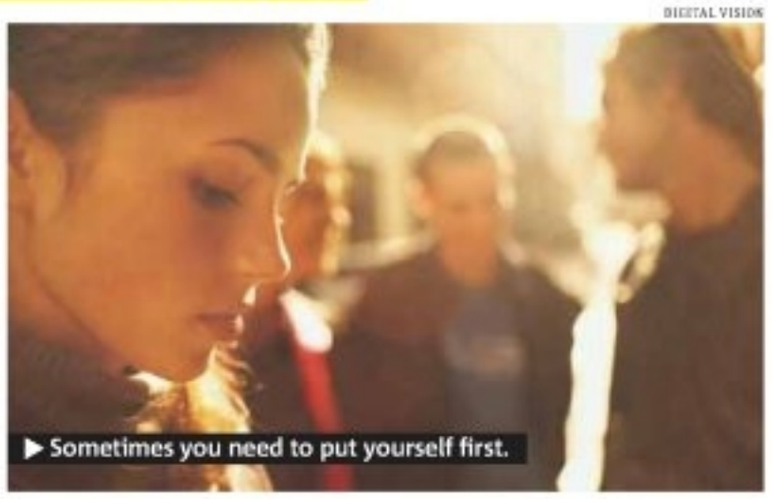

▶ Sometimes you need to put yourself first.

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Dream job: LEGO's Master Model Builder

- It's an almost impossible gig to land, and the openings are rare
- We'll tell you about it anyway if you promise not to get too jealous

Andrew Johnson has the job you wanted when you were 6 — and likely still covet now. As the new Master Model Builder of LEGOLAND Discovery Center Chicago, the 23-year-old designs 3-D LEGO models for the families that visit. Last week, he completed his first display since starting full-time at the beginning of the month.

"I just made a cardinal — that's the state bird of Illinois," he tells us. "It's a lot of fun to be able to design something and watch it come into creation so fast."

Plenty of aspects of the job could be described as "a lot of fun," which is why the position

"It's a lot of fun to be able to design something and watch it come into creation so fast."
JOHNSON

isn't easy to come by. There are only four Master Model Builders in the U.S. and an additional eight abroad. Johnson landed the gig after competing against eight other finalist applicants in a "build-off," during which he created a replica of Chicago's Daley Plaza Picasso sculpture, a model of the Lorax using less than 40 LEGO pieces and an especially tricky audience-member request: a violin and a hands-free harmonica.

For now, Johnson — who is one credit shy of a degree in history from DePaul University — isn't concerned with big-picture career questions or especially eager to join his friends in the cubicles.

"It's one of the only toys I can think of that you don't grow out of," says Johnson of LEGOs. "I'm going to stay here as long as I'm having fun — which I can see being a long time."

MONICA WEYMOUTH
monica.weymouth@metro.us

His building style

Johnson has been playing with LEGOs since he was a child, but sharpened his skills while working at a camp where the toys were used to teach architecture and engineering. "There are people who have a lot of kits, but I'm more of a free-builder — I haven't used instructions in a long time," he says. "I don't buy kits, just the basic building blocks. It's a lot of trial and error."

By the numbers

Cities paying the most for tech jobs

If you're in the tech industry, the West Coast might be the place to be. Recruiting firm CyberCoders just released data on which cities pay the best annual salaries for plugged-in talent, and San Jose and San Francisco comfortably lead the pack — although Philly breaks the top 10.

- **1. San Jose:** $119,412
- **2. San Francisco:** $112,739
- **3. New York:** $105,192
- **4. Washington, D.C.:** $99,618
- **5. Boston:** $99,099
- **6. Los Angeles:** $96,705
- **7. Brooklyn:** $96,696
- **8. Philadelphia:** $95,929
- **9. Chicago:** $94,899
- **10. Dallas:** $94,799

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▶ For his "interview," Johnson, right, competed in a LEGO build-off.

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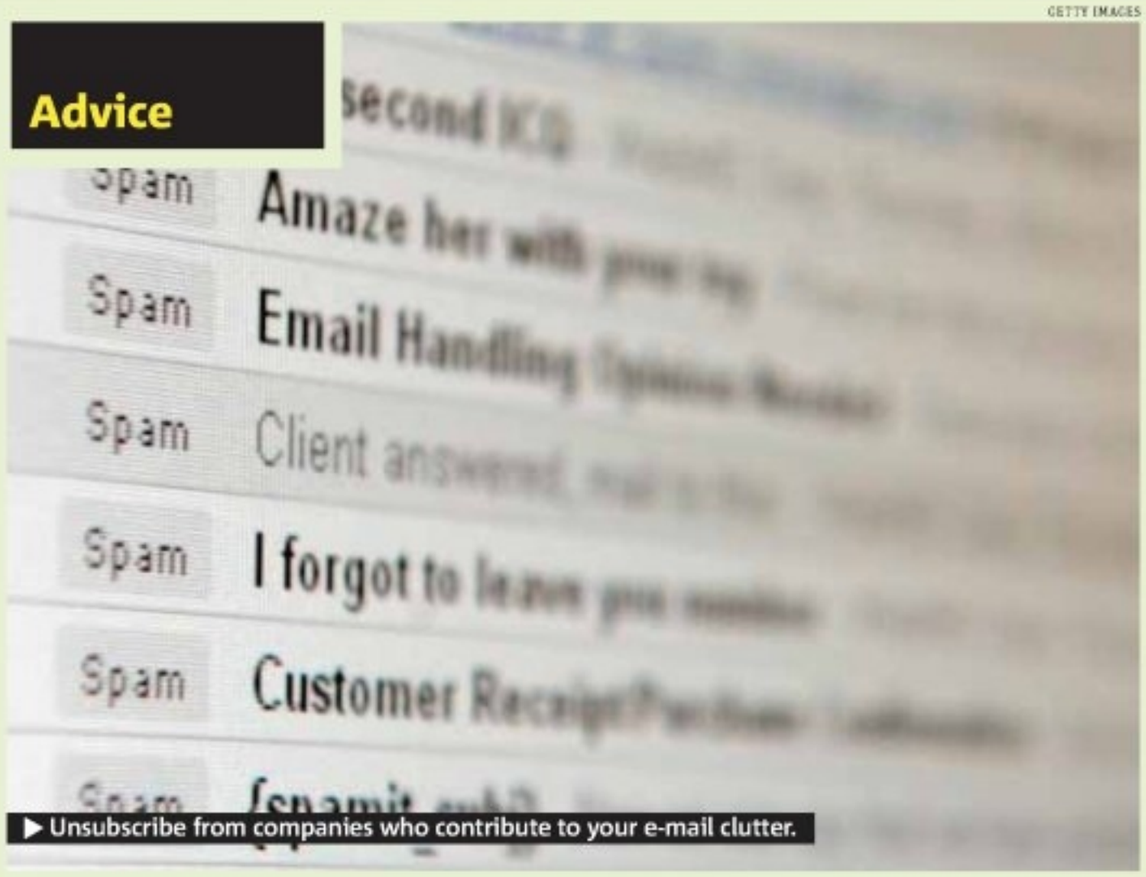

▶ Unsubscribe from companies who contribute to your e-mail clutter.

Spring cleaning? Don't forget about your inbox

Spring cleaning isn't reserved for closets and cubicles — it's also a good idea to make some sense out of that overflowing e-mail inbox.

Alexandra Kirsch, director of MC Interactive, relates a clean inbox to a better work environment — and better workers. "Doing a little spring e-mail inbox cleaning can be helpful to create a healthier workplace mind-set," she says. "It's never comforting to come to the office with a box full of messages, even if they've already been read."

Ease into this daunting task by starting with the obvious problems. "Go through your inbox and unsubscribe from companies who send a lot of e-mail that you never read," suggests OtherInbox founder Joshua Baer. "Also, go through your Facebook settings to reduce the number of e-mail notifications it sends you."

"E-mail messages have become the world's most prolific interrupters."
MARSHA EGAN

Don't wait until next spring

Some experts suggest you tidy up once a month, while others say it should be done every time you open your e-mail. Find a schedule that works for you and stick to it so your inbox will be a cleaner, happier place.

Five years ago, Marsha Egan founded "International Clean Out Your Inbox Week" (it takes place in mid-January). She runs consulting company InboxDetox, which offers services for both individuals and companies who want to increase efficiency. "E-mail messages have become the world's most prolific interrupters," she says. "Interruptions are costly. The time it takes to recover from every interruption saps productivity from each of us." ● JULIA WEST

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Letters

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Leftists too smart for our own good

RE: "BLACK-AND-WHITE WORLDVIEW FALLS FLAT": I have to laugh at the responses to my letter printed on Thursday. I built what I thought was a straw man of leftist ideologies — a caricature — and left-wingers defended it! I am shocked by the responses of people who are "better educated" and "smarter" than me. Sadly their idea of critical thinking amounts to "Bush lied, people died" and bad-mouthing Fox News. Never would they question anything MSNBC or any other corporate-owned leftist propaganda outlet spouted.
JOSHUA TORDOFF, VIA E-MAIL

Liberals and conservatives are two sides of the same coin. Presidents on both sides have started unjust and aggressive wars without the authority of Congress. Both sides use bailouts and/or stimulus as justification to "save" the economy. And both sides have increased the budget and expanded the debt since the 1920s. All of these activities by our federal government rip off the people every day. **KELLY DONNOE, VIA E-MAIL**

Trayvon Martin: Justice served?

Obama's appeal to the hearts and souls of Americans as a result of the overzealous, fatal actions of George Zimmerman should not have depended on whether Trayvon Martin was black, white or yellow or that he might have looked like Obama's son. It appears that Obama expresses concern only if an outrage occurs against a black. When the Black Panthers intimidated whites at voting booths Obama's black attorney general, Eric Holder, refused to prosecute. I want a president who represents all races, not just his own! **JOSEPH DUPONT, VIA E-MAIL**

The shooting of unarmed Trayvon should not have happened. A nation is outraged, and rightly so, when a neighborhood watch goes beyond the law. **FREDERICK R. BEDELL JR., VIA E-MAIL**

More Bush? How about less bias?

RE: "IS AMERICA READY FOR ANOTHER BUSH?": Are we ready for more Bush? The answer is a very firm no! By continuing to blame President Obama for the current financial crisis, the other Republican presidential candidates must believe Romney's Etch-A-Sketch tactic will work for them as well. Realistically, however, there's simply no erasing the dismal record of just how fiscally irresponsible the Republican Party is when it comes to the economy. President Bush turned a record surplus into a record deficit by implementing numerous disastrous fiscal policies during his presidency. Putting a Republican back in charge of the economy is equivalent to putting a fox in charge of the hen house, and America most definitely cannot afford it.
JEAN INGLIS, VIA E-MAIL

I was on the train reading Metro when I thought I was experiencing motion sickness. Then I realized I was suffering the ill effects of the spin in the Metropolitik column, where Brayden Simms chastises Mitt Romney and Karl Rove for spin. Gee, if that isn't the pot calling the kettle black I don't know what else is!
DON CANCELMO, WAYNE

E-mail your letters: **letters@metro.us**

Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words.
Metro reserves the right to edit all letters.
Please include your name and contact information.

Horoscope

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** Your instincts for exploiting opportunities to make or save money are keener than usual. You might not make a killing, but you will use your funds extremely well.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** It behooves you to be a good listener when a normally quiet friend is in a talkative mood. What he or she has to say could be extremely valuable.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** When it comes to competitive career involvements, it isn't likely to be who you know but what you know that counts. Whoever is best prepared will be the victor.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** Friends are apt to find you a delightful person to be around. It will become very obvious to them that their conversation and ideas will be well received by you.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** Something that might be of little interest to others but is of enormous importance to you can successfully produce a large profit — all because you have the motivation to take action.

♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** Let your companions have the same freedom of choice that you would like. If this simple rule is followed, everyone will end up being happy and in a convivial mood.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** Instead of focusing primarily on your own affairs, you might have to allocate some time and energy to someone else's projects or problems. Don't begrudge them your time or effort.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** The company you keep will exert a big influence over the way you look at the world. Try to spend your free time with companions who know how to enjoy life.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** Although you might not be able to wrap up all the little odds and ends from last week that you might like to, you can substantially reduce them if you make an effort.

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** It's best not to wait until the last minute to make an arrangement with another party, because the person with whom you'd like to get together is apt to make other plans.

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** Even if it isn't too likely that you will come across a super bargain, you should nevertheless be a comparison shopper. Those small amounts you save will add up impressively.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** Although mental endeavors may not be too tough for you, physical involvements could tire you out quickly. Don't press yourself beyond your normal endurance.
BERNICE BEDE OSOL

Across
1 Very fast
6 Map out
10 Flatten in the ring
14 Video game pioneer
15 Vagabond
16 Like prime steak
17 Scree makers
19 Cash, in Pretoria
20 911 responder
21 Rumpus
22 "-- Davis Eyes"
23 Paper products
24 Straight
25 Composts
28 Secondhand
30 Foul moods
31 Grandstands (2 wds.)
35 Oz canine
36 Headed for
37 Online journal
39 Didn't come out right (2 wds.)
41 Attack on a fort
42 Middies' sch.
43 Boss, slangily
44 River crosser
48 You, to Yves
49 Dinner beverages
50 Construct
52 Got the trophy
55 S&L customer
56 Chariot-race locale
58 Within reach
59 Part of A.M.
60 Merits
61 Handel contemporary
62 Noted lab assistant
63 Pay by mail

Down
1 Red on the inside
2 Ion source
3 Felt boots
4 Irritate
5 Perturbs
6 Donahue and Silvers
7 Ore deposit
8 Busy as -- --
9 Refusals
10 One of the Carpenters
11 Banded stone
12 Rumormonger
13 More weird
18 Trouser halves
22 Buys at auction
23 Majorette's stick
24 X-rated
25 Summer hrs.
26 Sufficient, in verse
27 Quote from "Star Trek" lieutenant
29 Walkman brand
31 Planted, as seed
32 Stage awards
33 Cut and run
34 Pea-soupers
36 Kind of camp
38 Right, to Dobbin
40 Harbor vessels
41 Quake
43 Wyo. neighbor
44 Safari leader
45 Kitchen gadget
46 Of a Peruvian empire
47 Raison --
48 Venomous snake
50 Sweet cherry
51 As much as (2 wds.)
52 Night crawler
53 Former science magazine
54 Bird habitat
56 Shogun's yes
57 Funny Charlotte --

1	2	3	4	5	■	6	7	8	9	■	10	11	12	13
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■	■	■	23				■	■	24					
25	26	27				■	28	29			■	■	■	■
30					■	31					32	33	34	■
35				■	36					■	37			38
■	39			40					■	41				
■	■	■	■	42				■	43					
44	45	46	47			■	■	48				■	■	■
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61				■	62				■	63				

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	7			3				9
				7	4			
2	5						6	4
			3	5				
1				9			4	
7			8		5	2		
	3		2				5	1

SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

		7	3					9
	4			2	7	8		
3			4		8	5	6	
	5					3		
	6			9			2	
		3					7	
	7	4	1		2			3
		5	7	4			8	
9					6	7		

SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

Solution to weekend's crossword

W	O	N	D	E	R	■	F	E	B	■	S	A	G	E
H	O	A	R	S	E	■	I	R	A	■	M	U	L	L
O	P	P	O	S	E	■	T	U	B	■	O	D	I	E
■	■	■	V	A	L	E	T	P	A	R	K	I	N	G
A	B	B	E	Y	■	V	E	T	■	W	I	T	T	Y
P	A	L	S	■	B	O	D	■	V	A	N	■	■	■
A	L	I	■	A	W	L	■	J	I	N	G	L	E	D
R	E	N	■	C	A	V	■	U	N	D	■	O	V	A
T	R	I	B	U	N	E	■	M	E	A	■	B	E	N
■	■	■	U	M	A	■	C	B	S	■	G	E	N	A
C	L	O	S	E	■	B	R	O	■	W	A	S	T	E
L	I	V	I	N	G	F	O	S	S	I	L	■	■	■
A	L	E	E	■	A	L	S	■	I	D	E	A	L	S
M	T	N	S	■	D	A	B	■	D	E	N	I	A	L
P	S	S	T	■	S	T	Y	■	E	N	A	M	O	R

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

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▶ Utley put no timeline on his return.

Utley not thinking about retirement

All-Star updates status Plans to play this season He won't need surgery, but will miss Opening Day

Chase Utley sure isn't talking like someone who is ready to call it quits.

The All-Star addressed the media yesterday for the first time since leaving Phillies camp to see a therapist. Utley underwent nonsurgical treatments and plans to continue manual therapy on his injured knees. Utley confirmed that he will miss Opening Day, but he fully expects to return.

"Obviously, I'm not going to be ready for Opening Day. I don't really have a timeline on when I will be available," Utley told reporters. "I'm very optimistic this is going to turn out well. But again, it's going to take a little time and I have to do this right."

Utley has been working with therapist Brett Fischer. He claims his knee condition isn't chronic and not tendinitis. Utley called it chondromalacia, which is an abnormal softening of the cartilage under the kneecap.

When news broke that Utley was making an "announcement," speculation ran wild about his future. The 33-year-old laughed off any notion that the condition would force him to retire.

"It's not bad enough to end my career. It's an issue I'm going to have to deal with," Utley said. "I'm 33 years old. I know some people think that's old, but I still feel like I have a lot of baseball left in me."

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Kansas, Kentucky punch last tickets

Jayhawks, Wildcats join Louisville, Ohio St. for Final Four party Madness resumes Saturday in Big Easy

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Bill Self and Kansas are back in the Final Four.

Kentucky put its foot on the gas early and never let off.

The Wildcats routed Baylor 82-70 yesterday to earn their second straight Final Four trip. Top-ranked Kentucky went on a 16-0 run and led by as many as 23 at one point. Michael Kidd-Gilchrist scored 19 points, with Anthony Davis adding 18 and 11 boards.

Kentucky gets a showdown with in-state rival Louisville on Saturday in the Final Four. John Calipari's squad won the first matchup, 69-62, back on New Year's Eve.

On the other side of the bracket, it was Kansas outlasting North Carolina, 80-67. The game was back and forth most of the afternoon until a frenetic final five minutes sealed it for Kansas. Tyshawn Taylor broke out of his tournament-long slump scoring 22 points and dishing out five assists.

The Jayhawks are back in the Final Four for the first time since 2008, when they won the national title. They'll get Ohio State on Saturday in New Orleans. METRO

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motoring

Electric car revolution to face increasing headwinds

Scott Kluth has a love-hate relationship with his new Fisker Karma luxury electric sedan.

The 34-year-old car-lover bought the plug-in hybrid electric Karma in December for $107,850 — but five days later the car's battery died as he was driving in downtown Chicago. While the car he affectionately calls a "head turner" was fixed in a recall, Kluth remains uncertain how much he will drive it.

"I just want a car that works," Kluth says. "It's a fun car to drive. It's just that I've lost confidence in it."

The Karma's problems — one vehicle died during testing by Consumer Reports this month — follow bad publicity arising from a probe of General Motors Co.'s Chevrolet Volt and weak sales of the car, and the closure or bankruptcy of several electric vehicle-related start-ups.

The unrelenting bad news has led to questions about the readiness of electric cars and raises fresh doubts about a technology that has been around since the late 1890s but is still struggling to win over the public.

Whether electric vehicles can find an audience beyond policymakers in Washington and Hollywood celebrities depends on lowering vehicle prices without selling cars at a loss, analysts and industry executives say, while extending driving range to make the cars competitive with their gasoline-powered peers.

"It's going to be a slow slog," says John O'Dell, senior green car editor at industry research firm Edmunds.com. "Maybe there's too much expectation of more and quicker success than might realistically be expected of a brand-new technology." REUTERS

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Justin Bieber received a pricey Fisker Karma for his birthday, but electric cars have been suffering from bad publicity.

$40K
Price of the Volt before federal subsidies

Too little too late?

Electric cars aren't a new concept. Henry Ford bought his wife, Clara, at least two in the early 1900s, offering at best 50 miles of driving range, according to the Henry Ford Museum. But analysts say automakers have not done a good enough job getting the costs down and explaining the technology to win over anyone beyond early adopters like actor Leonardo DiCaprio, pop idol Justin Bieber, comedian Jay Leno and former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Support at the top

President Obama's administration has been a strong proponent of electric vehicles and set a goal of getting 1 million on the road by 2015. Lux Research estimates that number will actually be fewer than 200,000. Both the Volt and Karma's development were supported by low-interest federal loans.

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March auto sales up 6 percent

New-vehicle sales in March are expected to rise 6 percent from last year due to strong demand in the retail market, according to J.D. Power and Associates and LMC Automotive.

Total sales in March are projected to finish at 1,372,400 cars and light trucks, compared with 1,244,009 vehicles in the same month last year, research firms J.D. Power and LMC said.

That estimate would translate to an annual sales rate in the month of 14.1 million vehicles, compared with 15 million in February and 13 million in March 2011, the research companies said.

"Each month of strong sales brings with it increased optimism that the pace of growth represents a true recovery for the sector," John Humphrey, senior vice president of global automotive operations at J.D. Power, said in a statement.

"Barring any future shock related to geopolitical issues in the Gulf region and further upward pressure on the price of oil, we believe sales will continue on a solid pace," he added.

U.S. auto sales topped expectations in January and February, although some analysts and industry executives have said the industry will not recover significantly until U.S. home prices pick up and consumers feel more prosperous.

"The first-quarter selling rate has outperformed the annual forecast for sales for the first time since 2008, when the automotive market started to decline," said Jeff Schuster, senior vice president of forecasting at LMC. "The vigorous start to 2012 suggests that there is further upside potential if the current pace continues through the summer months." **REUTERS**

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▶ Through the first 18 days of March, subcompact and compact cars accounted for about 23 percent of retail sales.

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